

# Skyway Park Community Vision



July 2008

Led and Developed by  
**POMEGRANATE**  **CENTER**  
for

**King County Parks & the King County Community Enhancement Initiative**



King County Parks **Your  
Big Backyard**



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# Skyway Park

**WETLANDS**  
 passive use only  
 no structures  
 trails ok  
 buffer required: 50 to 250 feet

**ACTIVE SPACE**  
 multi use possible  
 lights?

**POWERLINES**  
 no structures under powerlines  
 gardens possible  
 trails ok  
 off leash possible

**GREEN SPACE**  
 steep slope  
 visibility  
 trail opportunity  
 raised safety risks?

 Structures  
 Entry  
 Park Boundary



100 0 100 200 300 400 Feet  


# Introduction

Skyway Park is located in the West Hill community, an unincorporated urban area on Lake Washington that is bordered by Seattle to the north, Tukwila to the west and south, and Renton to the east. Skyway Park is 23 acres and has three baseball fields, an informal football/soccer field, a playground, basketball and tennis courts, and a restroom. There are three wetlands in the park that function as the headwaters of Taylor Creek, a salmon-bearing stream that passes through Seattle's Deadhorse Canyon and enters Lake Washington.

Skyway Park's central location serves a dense residential neighborhood and connects to two business districts along busy Renton Avenue. This means that the park's health and vitality have an impact on the surrounding neighborhood and the people who live there. However, the park is an under-utilized community asset, due mainly to accessibility and safety concerns.

Skyway Park is a hidden treasure. I love the park, live near it and walk in it almost everyday. I can't wait to see it be vital the way it used to be!

- *Ginny Rabago*, Skyway resident and project participant

Skyway Park is part of the vast system of neighborhood and regional parks and trails under the care of King County Parks and Recreation Division. King County Parks serves the community and enhances regional quality of life through partnerships, entrepreneurial initiatives, and sound stewardship of parks, trails and open space. It offers more than 25,000 acres of parks and natural lands, including such regional treasures as Marymoor Park and Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park, 175 miles of regional trails, plus pools and a world-class aquatic center. By cultivating strong relationships with non-profit, corporate and community partners, King County Parks enhances park amenities while reducing costs and contributing our region's exceptional quality of life.





Skyway Park looking north, Fall 2007

Skyway Park looking East with the Parkside Condominiums in the background, Fall 2007



# Project Background

By working across King County agencies, the Community Enhancement Initiative (CEI) seeks to better leverage resources, encourage broad participation and leadership, and foster public and private partnerships to create places that embrace equity of opportunity, tread lightly on the environment, and share in the health and prosperity of the region.

Skyway, which is part of the West Hill community, is one of the focus areas of the Community Enhancement Initiative. Located between the Cities of Seattle and Renton in unincorporated King County, the West Hill community consists of the neighborhoods of Bryn Mawr, Campbell Hill, Earlington, Hill Top, Lakeridge, Panorama View, Skycrest, and Skyway.

Data from the 2000 US Census shows that the community's population demographics consist of 37% White, 32% African American, and 24% Asian/Pacific Islander. When compared with the rest of the county, the median household income in the community was 20% less than the countywide median, and nearly 40% less for African American households. In addition to struggling with economic development, the community experienced higher levels of crime than most areas of the county.

The Community Enhancement Initiative identified Skyway Park as a key asset in community revitalization, and through a community-generated vision, set out to achieve the following community enhancement goals:

- Provide a safe environment for recreation and exercise
- Demonstrate sound environmental practices, such as wetland and forest restoration
- Be sensitive to concerns about gentrification and equitably serve a culturally and economically diverse community
- Leverage the park's central location to improve neighborhood walkability and connectivity

This project is really important because it has galvanized people of a polarized community. The Skyway Park project is something that everybody could work on and feel good about; that brings people together.

- *Dian Ferguson*, Steering Team Member





Current playground at Skyway Park

Skyway Park looking East, wetland area Parkside Condominiums





# Project Background (Continued)

As part of the Skyway Community Enhancement Initiative, funding for Skyway Park Community Vision came from five King County agencies: Parks and Recreation, Management and Budget, Sheriff's Office, Public Health, and Community Services. The West Hill Business Association also secured a grant from the Neighbor-to-Nighbor Fund to support the community engagement process.

With an overall goal of creating an actionable vision to make Skyway Park into a vibrant, safe and frequently-used community asset, this effort sought to simultaneously encourage community participation and engagement, strengthen collaborative relationships, and build leadership capacity to accomplish future goals within the greater Skyway neighborhood.

Pomegranate Center was invited by King County Parks and the Community Enhancement Initiative participants to lead the community engagement process, which would culminate with a set of recommendations for future directions of park development. Pomegranate Center is an internationally recognized leader in developing neighborhood gathering places and a nonprofit devoted to community-generated design and development. For more than 21 years, Pomegranate Center has worked with communities to create gathering places—shared public spaces including parks, neighborhood focal points, community trails, and public artworks—that contribute to community distinction, vitality and social interaction. No one understands a community like its own residents. As such, Pomegranate Center engages community members at every stage of development: from planning and design through construction. Each year, neighborhood associations, housing authorities, non-profit developers and government agencies turn to Pomegranate Center for community-based planning, technical support and design-build services.



Community Meeting #1

Community Meeting #2



# Process and Guiding Principles

The community visioning process involved a series of three community meetings, four steering group meetings, one youth meeting at Skyway Boys and Girls Club and a park use survey of approximately 25 residents. At the first two meetings, November 7 and December 5, 2007, the community identified a set of principles unique to Skyway residents.

## Guiding Principles:

- Integrate art
- Practice environmental sustainability
- Emphasize safety
- Be inclusive of all generations and cultures
- Create connectivity: to businesses, other parks, and organizations
- Collaborate and foster partnerships
- Accommodate co-existing uses

The community came forward with many dreams and specific ideas. There could be no meaningful park design without this input. I think Skyway Park could become the community focal point.

- Theresa McLean, Skyway resident and project participant

Each of the three community meetings began by reviewing these guiding principles as a reminder that the design solutions are a way of realizing these values. The community members then developed design concepts aligned with these criteria.

Finally, Pomegranate Center integrated the community-generated suggestions into this vision document with the assistance of King County agencies, landscape architects, and engineers, among other technical support.





Steering Committee

Skyway Youth



# Participants

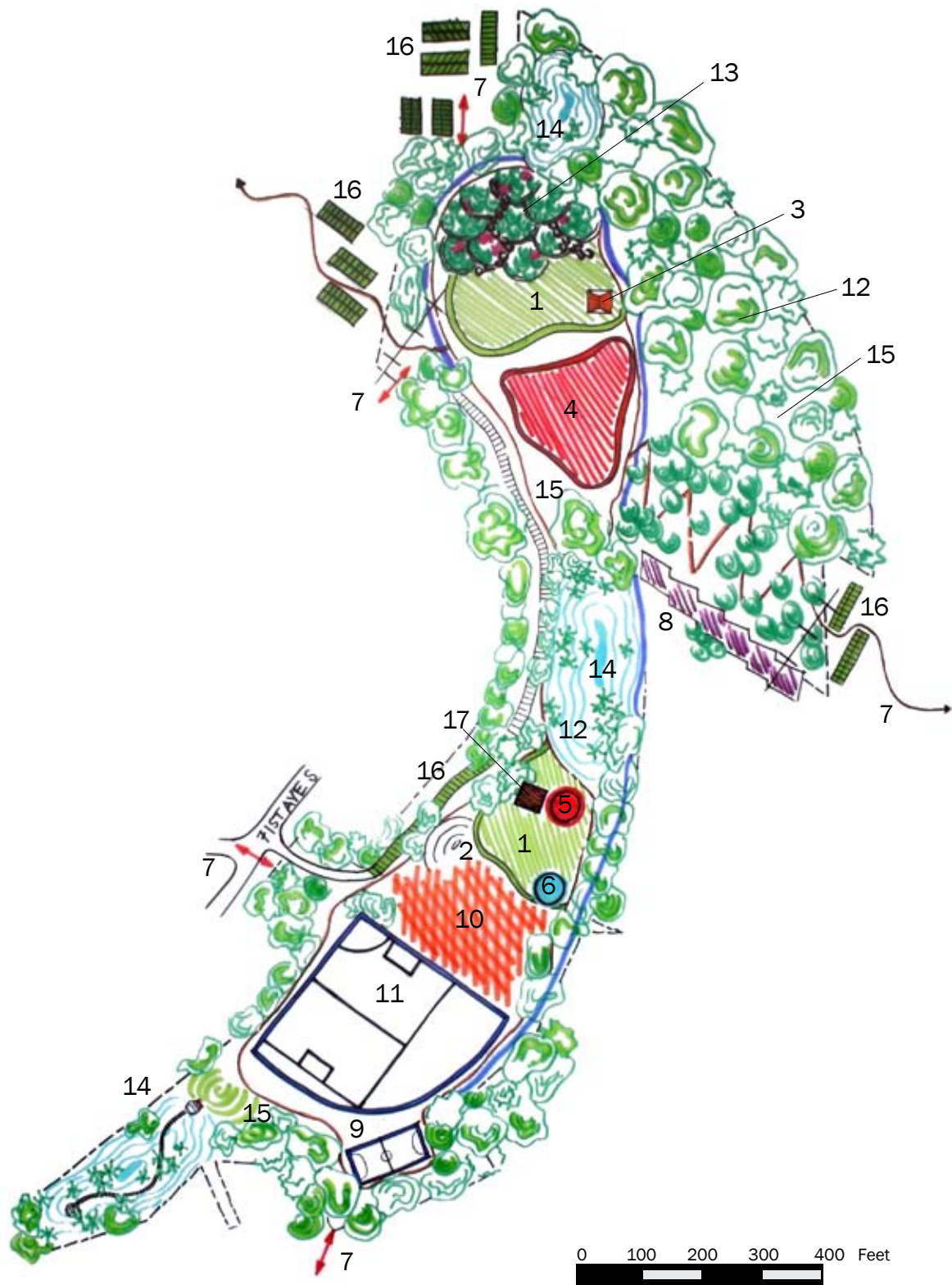
During the six months of public meetings, over 150 community members participated. The following are the names of those who signed-in at each gathering:

Abbi Torres	Joan Henderson
Aisha Foster	John Hughes
Aleta Enert	John Ringler
Alex Quirit*	Jonathan Harris
Angie Lorbeski	Jonthomas Williams*
Bernard Koontz	Jovon Bosley
Bobbe Hughes	Joy Bryngelson
Bong Sto. Domingo	Joyce Clark
Bonnie Pearce	Karen Morgan
Booker T. Mckinion	Karla Manus
Bookie Gates	Kim Juelfs
Butch Lovelace*	Kirsten Wilhelm*
Caleb Tullen	Lara Holman Garritano*
Caren Adams	Larry Laughlin
Carlos Sierra	Leah Fuller
Casey E Franks	Linda Vane
CB McDaniel	Lorissa Simpson
Cheryl Scheuerman	Lynn Herink
Claire Gear	Mark Fitzgerald
Curtis Faulks	Martinez
Dale Christie	Meg Pitman*
Darrell Dobson	Michael Brockway
DeAnna Skeel	Michele Savelle
Debbie Sacharoff	Mike Keller
Dian Ferguson*	Mikhail Khackiyants*
Diane Gaylord	Nichola Fulmer
Dolores Briggs	Pamela Williams
Dr. Rob Buccaw	Pat Sexton
Emil Foster	Paul Berry
Frana Milan*	Reid Johnson
Fred Cotton	Rob Detzner*
Fred Pearce	Rodney Wing
Gene Lux	Romell Mitchell
Gerald Smiley	Roxanne White
Ginny Rabago*	Scot McSwane
Greg Detzner	Shanan Torres
Greg Harris	Sharon Greer
Gurine Nordby	Sherry Dione
Ira Sacharoff*	Shimika Dowlen
Irana Hawkins	Stefanie Blackburn
Jackie Rodriguez*	Stephanie Wilson
James Canon	Steve Baber*
James H Harrison Jr.	Sue Poan
Jan Harris	Tari Nelson-Zager
Janet Vetter	Tess Guerzon
Jennifer Simon	Theresa McLean*
Jeremy Valenta*	Vivian Williams

I was compelled to participate in this project because it was a chance to get involved in my community and to help change the current condition of Skyway Park.

-Rob Detzner, Skyway resident and steering team member

\* Steering committee members





# Community Vision & Proposed Concepts

This community generated vision balances social, recreational and natural amenities. The northern part of the park is envisioned as a quieter area where community gardens and an off-leash dog park co-exist with trails and wooded areas. The southern portion is envisioned as more active, with a synthetic surface athletic field, an amphitheater for community celebrations, play areas for children of different ages and open spaces where a variety of activities can happen. The park vision is intended to compliment, and link to, a larger network of greenspaces in the region.

This is a vision, understood by the community to be one that demands initial community ownership as well as long-term stewardship. Involvement can take many forms, from the occasional gathering of neighbors doing a park clean-up to a gardener's group caring for p-patches. A "Friends of Skyway Park", for example, could serve as an umbrella group representing community members and park user groups and could advocate for the park among the broader community and King County.

The following suggested amenities reflect ideas proposed by community members to enhance Skyway Park. Each concept is intended to serve many purposes at once. As such, the concepts leave certain specificities up to the community members to develop so their handiwork and ownership is honored. The priority of implementation for each amenity will, in part, depend on a long-term stewardship commitment from community members.

## **SOCIAL**

1. Central "plaza"/open space
2. Amphitheater
3. Shelters
4. Off-leash dog park
5. Tot lot
6. Play structure
7. Gateways

## **RECREATIONAL**

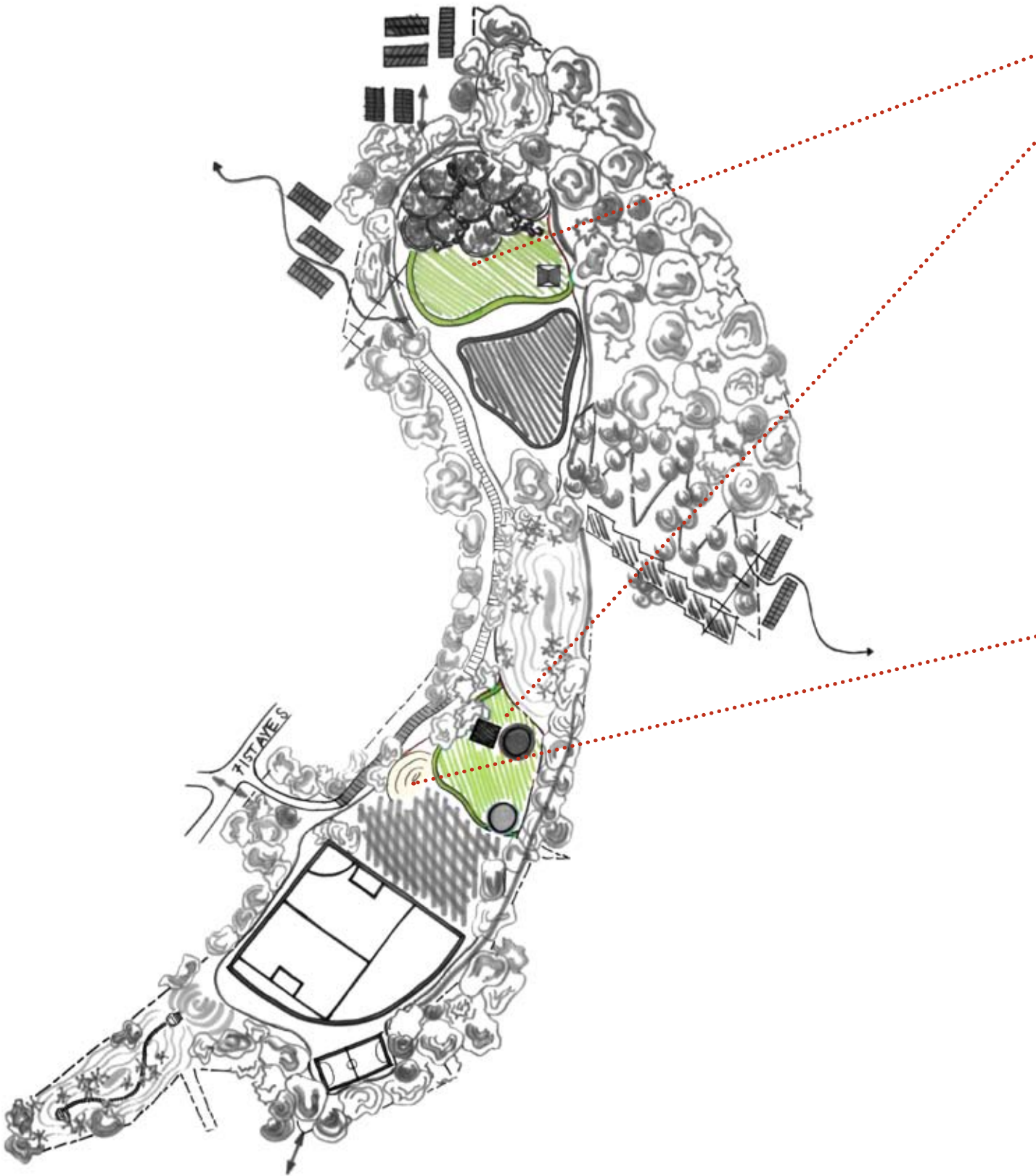
8. Skate park
9. Basketball & tennis courts
10. Open playfield
11. Upgraded athletic fields

## **NATURAL**

12. Natural areas
13. Community garden
14. Wetlands, boardwalks & kiosks
15. Trails

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

16. Suggested parking
17. Improved restrooms
18. Additional improvements



## Central “Plaza”

A plaza area is a place for informal community gatherings which can also accommodate organized activities. In Skyway Park, two such gathering places could be possible in the northern area (150' x 300') and the southern area (250' x 200'). This would respond to community members' interest in using the park as focal point for family and community activities.

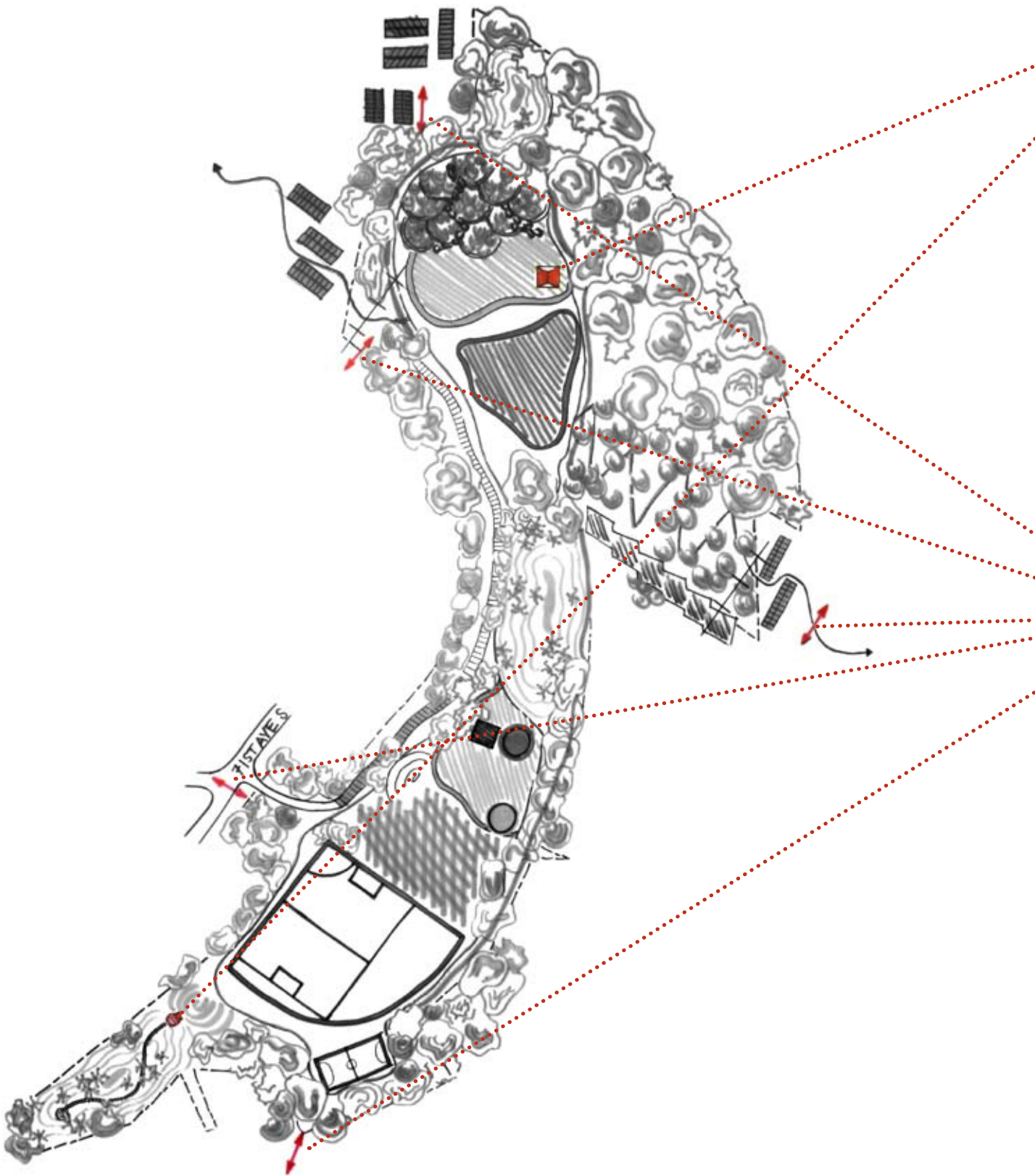


## Amphitheater

A venue for concerts, performances, storytelling, ceremonies and celebrations, the amphitheater serves as a place for formal gatherings. Within Skyway Park, the community suggests it be located in close proximity to the southern plaza and the open playfield to encourage a connection of large social spaces which would also allow for extra seating during large events.







## Shelters

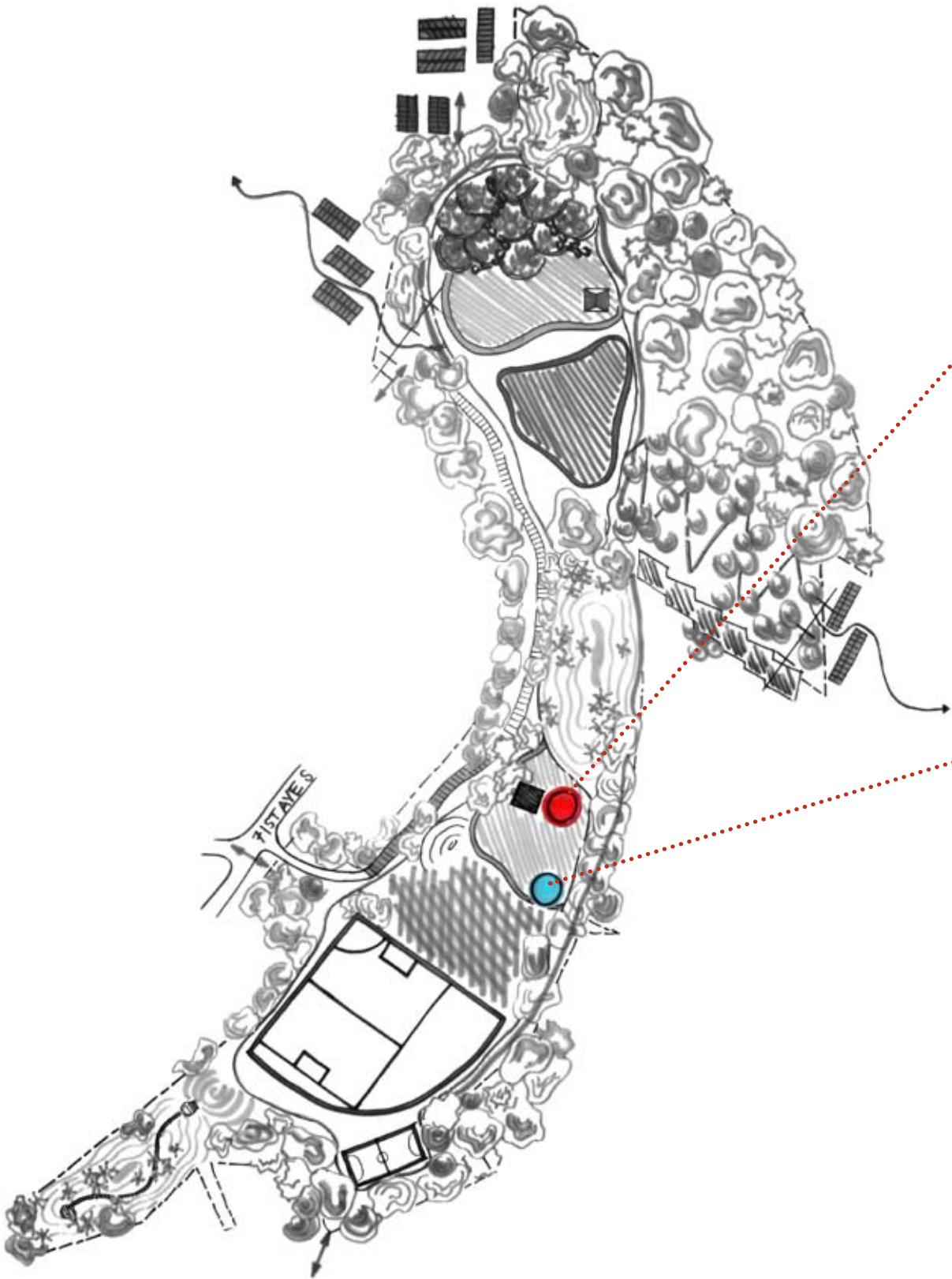
Larger shelters or a cluster of smaller shelters serve as a refuge from sun or rain and provide a place for informal occasions like picnics, BBQs, family gatherings, and parties. Within Skyway park there are many locations for shelters whether it be next to the off-leash dog park for dog-owners to socialize, at the start of a wetland boardwalk for a quiet retreat, or near the active park center as a place from which to watch all the recreation.



## Gateways

Gateways serve as markers, identity pieces by which people locate an entryptpoint. As Skyway Park is overlooked and underused by the community, placing gateways at each major point of entry to the park will generate broader awareness of its location. These gateways could ceremonially mark the entrances, as well as feature lighting, signage, art work and kiosks unique to Skyway.







## Tot Lot

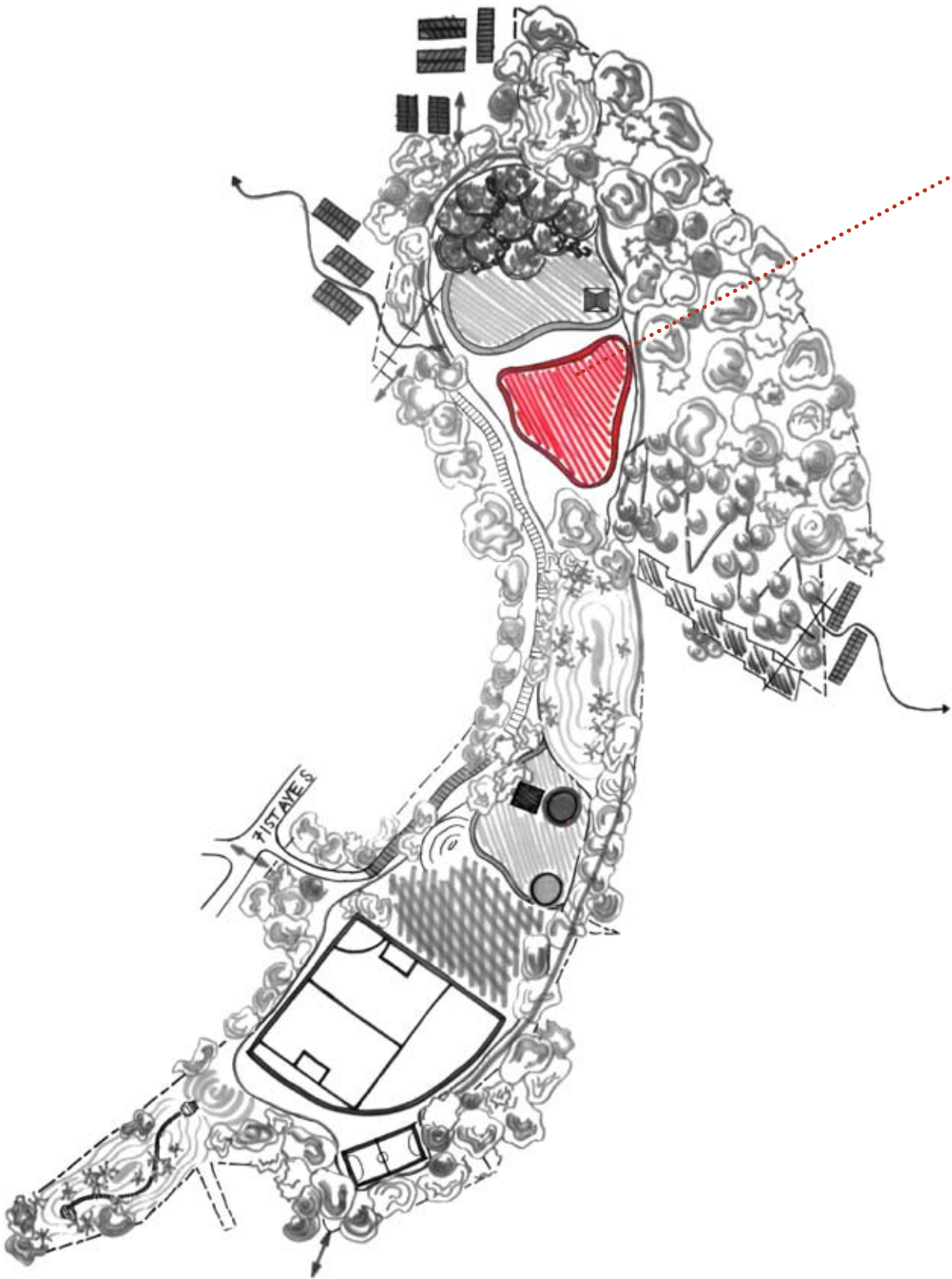
Tot lots are play areas designed specifically for young children. They vary in style: some are natural playscapes with rock, wood and water features while others are intricately-built play structures. The community determined that this renovated tot lot would be an important way of drawing more families to the park and should be located where the current play structure is. It would be approximately 20' x 30' in size.



## Play Structure

Play structures vary widely in design depending upon the age group for which they are built. A meeting with middle-school youth at the Boys and Girls Club uncovered an interest in play equipment that is age and size appropriate for you in their early teens. Located just south of the tot lot, an area approximately 22' x 30' could include an advanced climbing wall, tire swings and rope ladders.





## Off-leash Dog Park

An off-leash dog park is a social amenity not only for dogs but also for their owners. Located in the northern portion of the park this 3/4 acre fenced area would be available for use from dawn to dusk. It encourages frequent park use; which discourages park misuse.

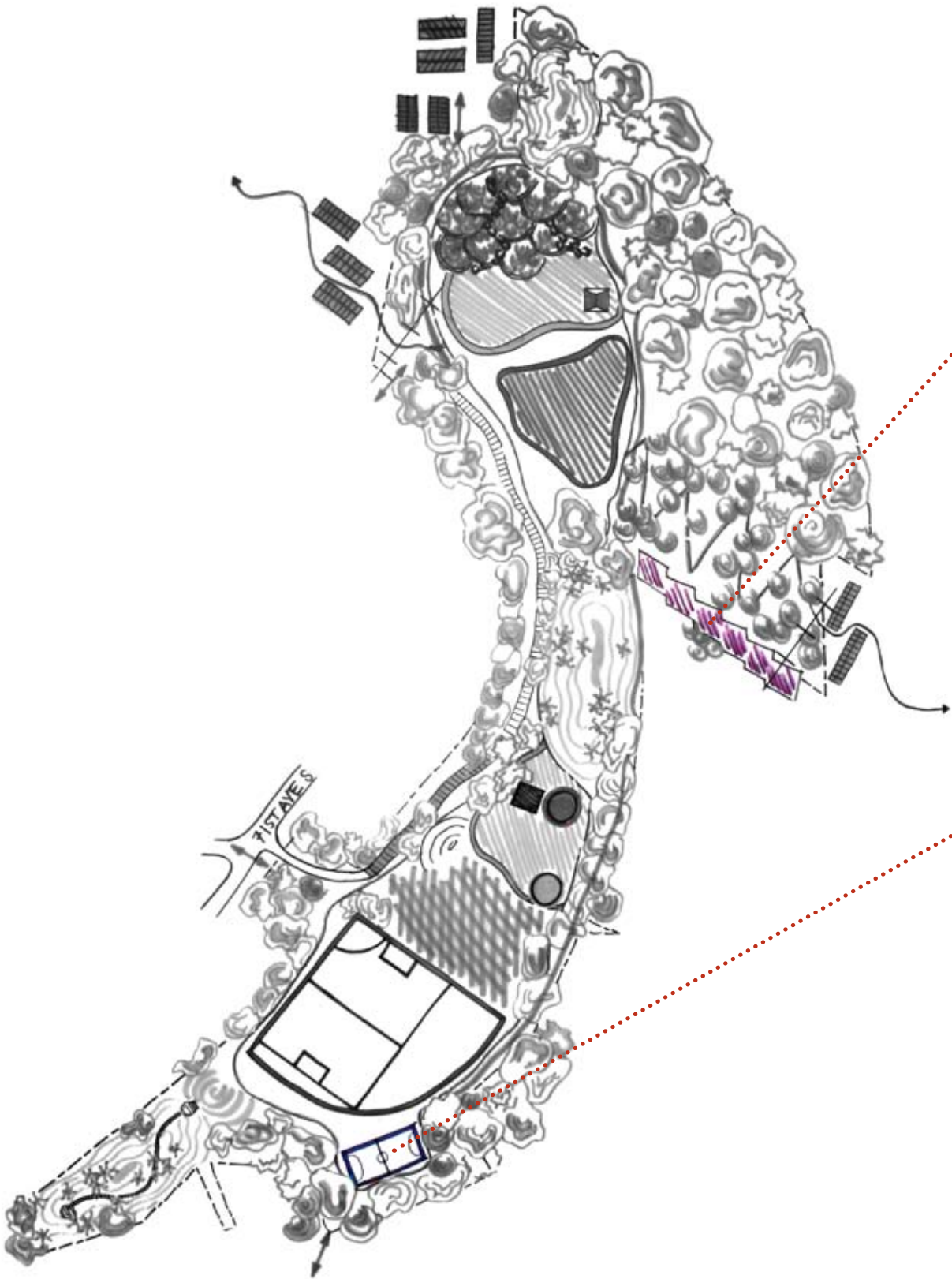


## Concessions

A mobile concession cart can be moved within a park depending on where activity is concentrated. As a way of providing food and drinks to park visitors, the community adopted the idea of a concession cart that could also be adapted to manage sports equipment rentals. King County Parks would establish a contract with a mobile concession vendor in the park. During times of the year when the park is less active, it could be moved into other areas to serve the community.







## Skate Park

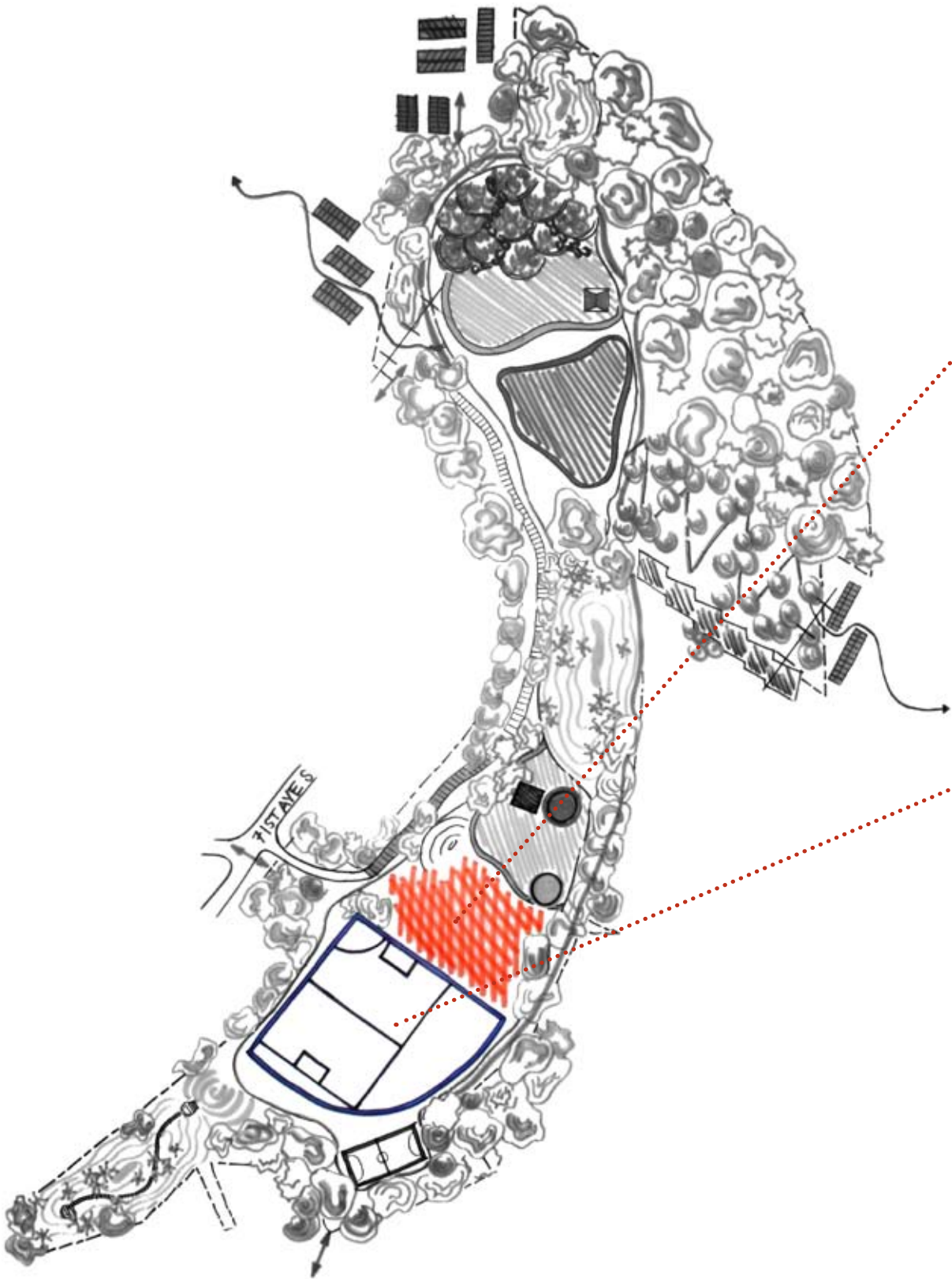
A skate park is an area designed to use concrete curbs, jumps and half-pipes as well as rails, slopes and stairs for skateboard skill-building. As a way of providing additional recreation options for the youth of Skyway, a skate park would take advantage of the pre-existing slope on the eastern edge of the park. This would be centrally located and visible to encourage healthy use. The size of the skatepark has yet to be determined but an area of 50' x 300' will act as a placeholder.



## Basketball and Tennis Courts

Basketball and tennis courts located in parks function as a place for organized and spontaneous sports activity. In Skyway Park, there are several basketball and tennis courts but all of them are under-utilized. By installing synthetic surfaces and lighting, the combined courts on the park's southeast edge would increase hours of usability and provide an amenity for athletes that currently have to go elsewhere.







## Open Playfield

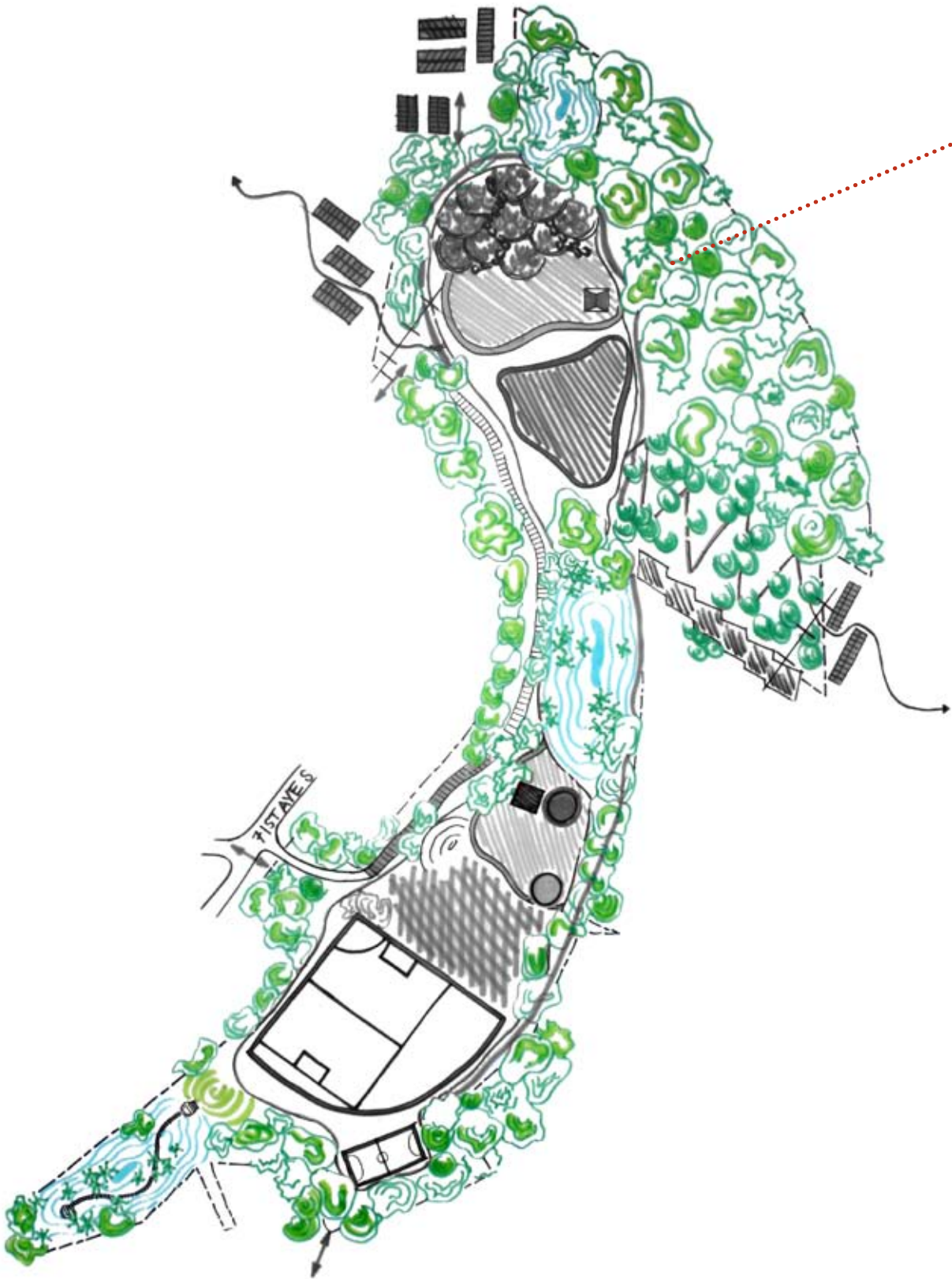
An open playfield is a place for organized or unprogrammed activities such as frisbee, soccer, bocce, kite-flying, etc. In Skyway Park, such a space would be located in close proximity to the amphitheater, the southern plaza and the athletic fields and could accommodate overflow during large social or athletic events. Its approximate size would be 350' x 250'.



## Upgraded Athletic Field

The current soccer, baseball and football fields in Skyway Park are under-utilized. Combining these fields, upgrading to a synthetic surface, and installing lighting would attract more frequent use. These features would increase the hours of usability later at night and longer into the rainy season. The sports events could be carefully managed to lower the impact of parking on surrounding neighbors.







## Natural Areas

Skyway Park features many natural assets. If properly cared for, these areas could provide a good balance to the more structured, recreational amenities suggested in this document. Nurturing a healthier ecosystem in Skyway Park and helping filter the area's polluted stormwater would also positively impact the water quality in salmon-bearing Taylor Creek.

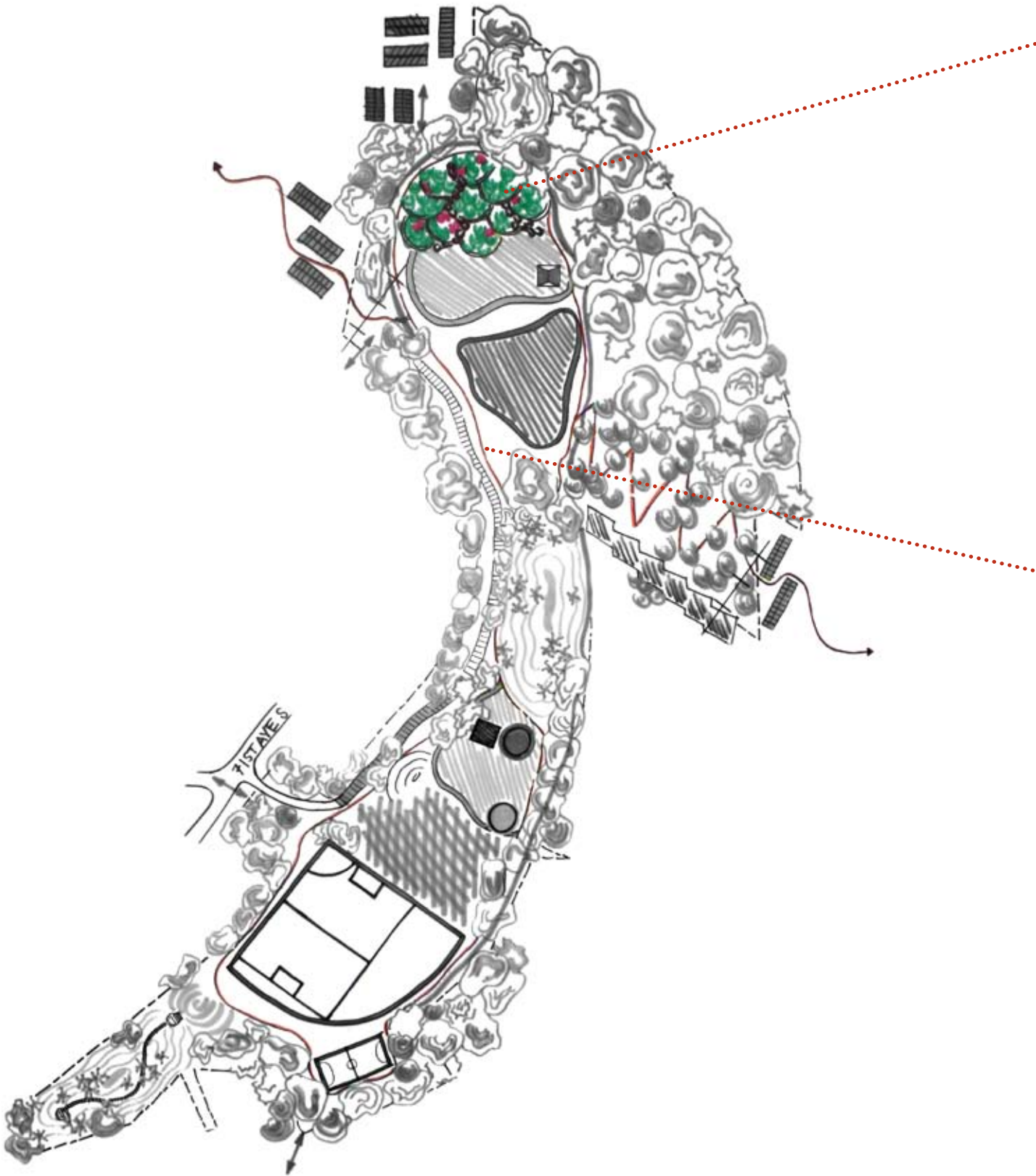
A group of interested community members could take on the responsibility to steward natural areas such as wetlands, creeks, and wooded slopes. Such a group could help improve safety of Skyway Park by clearing sightlines currently obstructed by overgrown invasive plant species. Consistent maintenance can quickly change the appearance and appeal of the park.



Skyway Park creek daylighting: before and after







## Community Garden

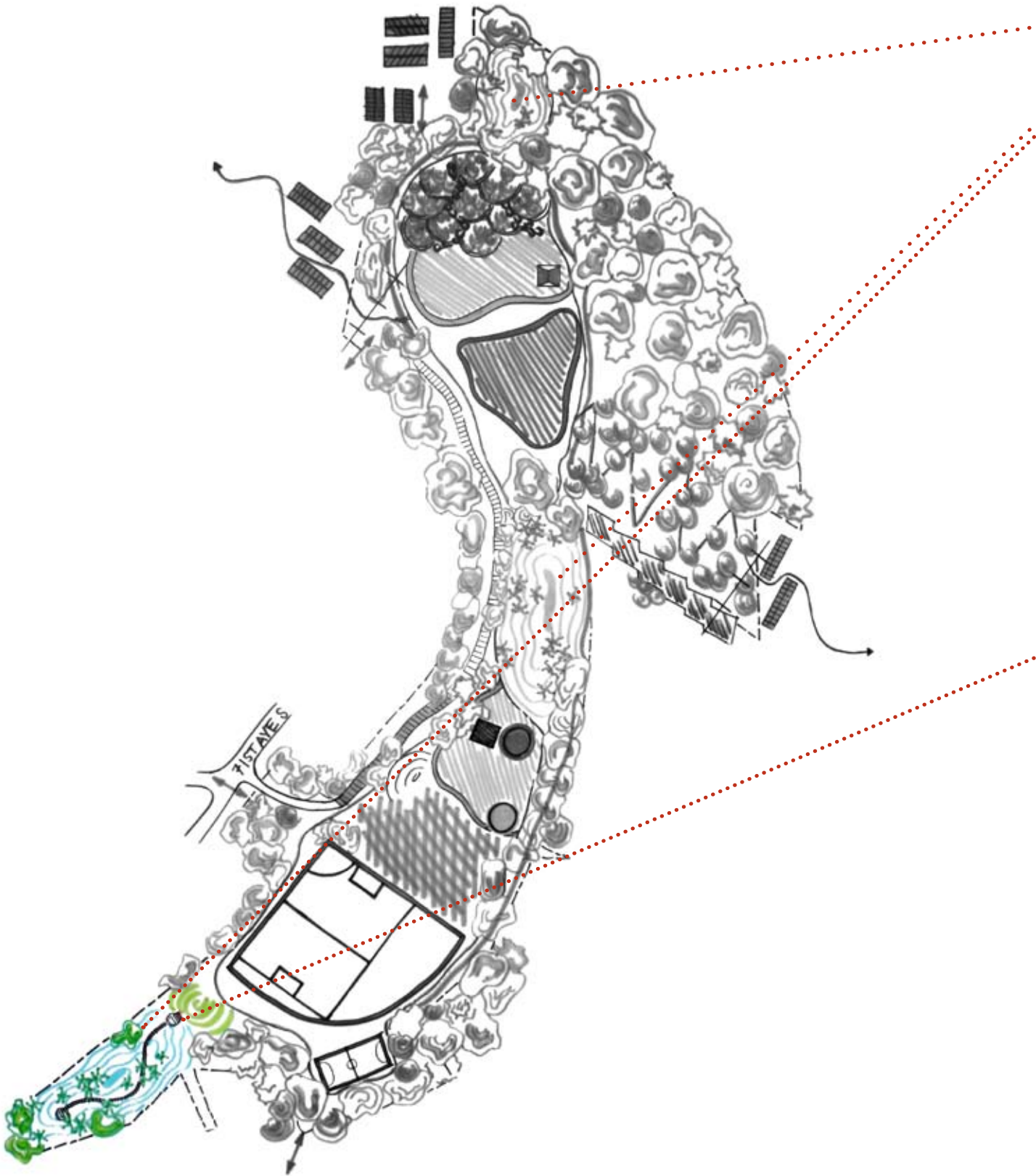
A community garden is an area designated to the public for flower and vegetable growing. It often becomes a place that also harvests social interaction. The community garden in Skyway Park would be part of a network of quieter, more natural spaces and can be located near the north entrance of the park for convenient loading and unloading. It would be approximately 150' x 250' in size.



## Trails

Park trails serve many purposes: to create ease of passage, provide retreat, encourage exercise, and offer educational opportunities. A variety of trails in Skyway Park could serve different populations and uses. Pedestrian pathways could meander through natural areas while others could be ADA accessible and circle the perimeter of the park. Trails would feature lighting to expand hours of usability and address concerns of safety.

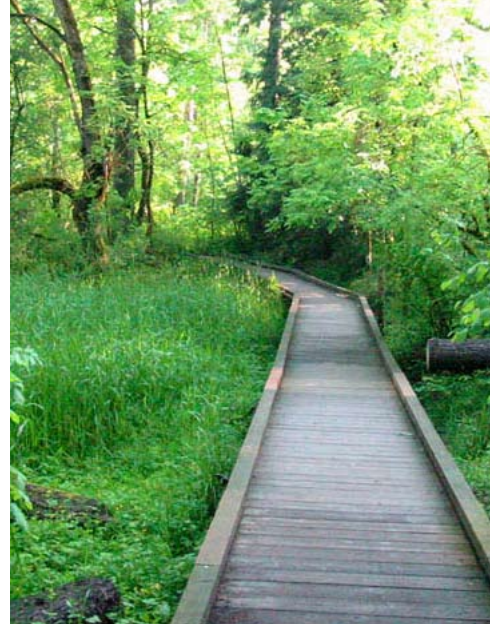






## Boardwalks

Boardwalks are pathways specifically designed around areas of water. There are three wetlands within Skyway Park, the headwaters of salmon-bearing Taylor Creek, that have the potential to feature boardwalks. Park visitors would be able to explore areas that are presently inaccessible, providing opportunities for environmental education and wetland preservation.



## Kiosks

Kiosks can be used as a tool to communicate to the public a variety of things: environmental information, community activities or park events. In Skyway Park, these kiosks could be a way of educating visitors about natural habitat if placed near preserved natural areas like the wetlands. They could also serve as information boards that post park events and community news when located in high traffic areas like park entrances or central “plazas.” The kiosks could be free-standing (as in the picture) or integrated into picnic shelters and gateways.







## Suggested Parking

Three of the four following suggested parking additions would require securing private property for public use through acquisition or easements. The community recommended this be pursued because, as the park becomes more frequented, the demand for parking will increase. In order to maximize use of current parking the community suggested another exit and loading zone on the western edge of the park. Acquiring additional parking options without sacrificing park land would lower impact on neighbors during peak hours of activity. Such options might include negotiating agreements with the land owners of the casino parking lot at the north entrance and the plots under the power lines. If park programs are well managed, the potential for over-crowded lots is reduced.



## Improved Restrooms

The youth of Skyway Boys and Girls Club, among other community members, recognize bathrooms as an essential facility. Upgraded facilities would accommodate increased park use and provide a safer, more sanitary service.

## Additional Improvements

With park safety being a significant concern among community members, several suggestions were made during the public process to address this. One was to ensure that improved lighting be integrated in future park enhancements. The second was to remove perimeter fencing which creates a barrier for law enforcement and restricts entry and exit points. The third community-endorsed recommendation was to install a call box for emergency situations.





Skyway Park Blackberry Removal Party



Blackberry removal before and after



# Early Success

At the final community meeting, a “Friends of Skyway Park” group was formed. This committee, along with steering group members, will help determine how to present this vision to the broader community and keep the community’s momentum moving forward to implement it. Some possible “Early Success” events could include:

- Celebrating park possibilities: A party in the park with performances, sports events, and a BBQ. Friends of Skyway Park could lead tours around the park to orient people with redevelopment plans.
- Making a statement: Hosting a work party to design and construct a simple gateway, kiosk or bench. This serves as a powerful statement on the commitment to create change in the park.
- Habitat restoration work parties: Community members can learn about park vegetation, how to effectively maintain it and take ownership by participating in park work parties. These events provide an easy way for someone to get involved and connected to the park, while contributing to improved park aesthetics and ecological health.

Any initial action is crucial to the long term success of park improvement efforts and to catalyzing further community and economic enhancement in this neighborhood.

This project excites me because it brought in some new leadership. People that have not been previously involved in community issues are now taking leadership in making this project happen.

- Dian Ferguson, president of the West Hill Business Association





North entrance to Skyway Park through wetland, Spring 2008

Skyway Park walking path, Spring 2008





# Realizing the Vision

Carrying out the recommended design concepts outlined in this vision will require long-term collaboration between Parks and other King County agencies, as well as with community-based groups, such as Friends of Skyway Park, the West Hill Community Council, and the West Hill Business Association. These efforts will help educate visitors about the park's natural heritage, improve orientation through the park, and create a more interesting, community-oriented space.

In addition to the early success projects mentioned in the previous section, some short-term actions are underway and in various stages of planning and execution, as noted below:

## *Habitat restoration*

In partnership with University of Washington, Parks will take steps to restore the park's three wetland areas and link the park together with a series of trails and boardwalks where interpretive signage and public art can be incorporated. This project is likely to take place during late 2008 through mid-2009.

Some initial habitat restoration has already been completed. In March 2008, one section of piped groundwater was uncovered and native plants and trees were installed. Community members have also carried out several habitat restoration work parties in the park over the past three months, which has helped clear invasive species and plant and maintain native vegetation.

Habitat restoration will enhance the health of the park's natural areas including improving the water quality of Taylor Creek, a salmon-bearing stream which has one of its sources in Skyway Park. These improvements will also help address flooding and drainage issues. In addition, this will improve safety by increasing visibility within the park issue that was identified during the community engagement process.

King County Parks will help fund these efforts through its Community Partnerships and Grants (CPG) Program, which provides seed funding to match the sweat equity, recreation programming, and creative resources of sports associations, community organizations, and other non-profits to enhance amenities on King County Parks' properties.

## *Athletic field improvements*

Parks has begun to search for potential partners and funding opportunities that would make it possible to develop a multi-use, synthetic surface athletic field. This is an effort that Parks will explore in the long-term.

In addition, Parks will continue pursuing opportunities to partner with community members and groups, such as the Skyway Boys & Girls Club and Friends of Skyway Park, to identify and seek funding for programs and park improvements that enhance the quality of life for the greater Skyway community.



# Resources

King County	<a href="http://www.kingcounty.gov">www.kingcounty.gov</a> Jeremy Valenta, 206-205-0715
King County Parks	<a href="http://www.kingcounty.gov/parks">www.kingcounty.gov/parks</a> Butch Lovelace & Frana Milan, 206-296-8687
Friends of Skway Park list serve	<a href="http://www.groups.google.com/groups/friends-of-skyway-park">www.groups.google.com/groups/friends-of-skyway-park</a>
West Hill Community Council	<a href="http://www.westhillcommunity.com">www.westhillcommunity.com</a>
West Hill Business Association	<a href="http://www.westhillbusinessassociation.org">www.westhillbusinessassociation.org</a> 206-772-9232
Skyway Boys and Girls Club	<a href="http://www.positiveplace.org">www.positiveplace.org</a> 206-436-1920
King County Sheriff's Office	<a href="http://www.kingcounty.gov/safety/sheriff/">www.kingcounty.gov/safety/sheriff/</a>
Pomegranate Center	<a href="http://www.pomegranate.org">www.pomegranate.org</a> Milenko Matanovic & Bree Delgadillo, 425-557-6412